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A new darter species described from Buck Creek, Pulaski County



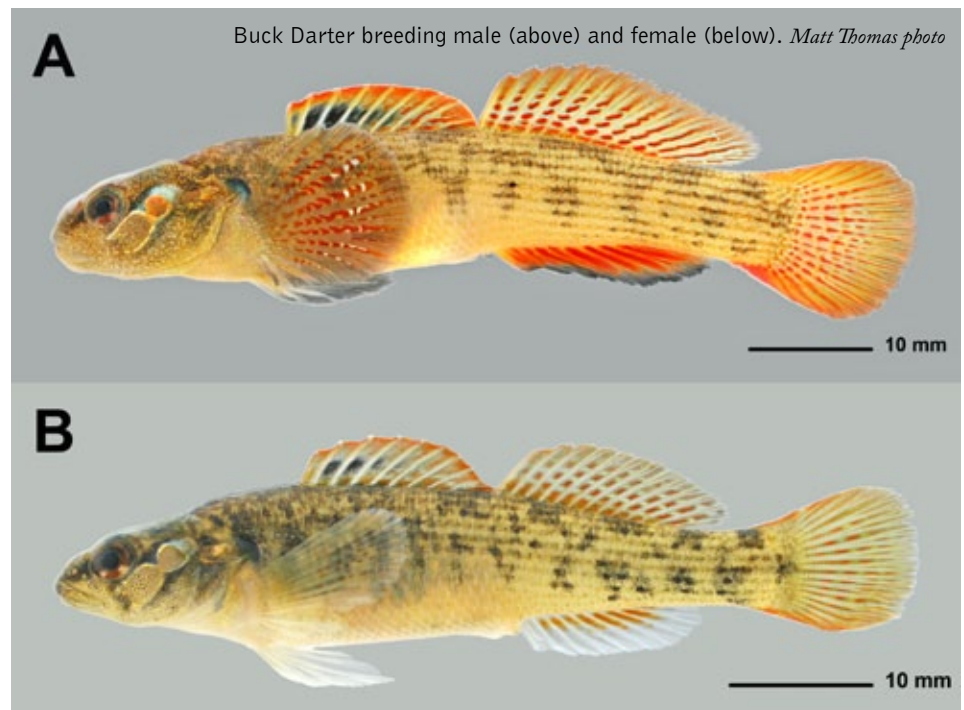
Fish and Wildlife ichthyologists Matt Thomas and Stephanie Brandt

While conducting surveys for rare fish species in Buck Creek in 2010, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife ichthyologists **Matt Thomas** and **Stephanie Brandt** captured some unusual looking specimens of what had been recognized as the Striped Darter (*Etheostoma virgatum*).

The Striped Darter is a species that was known to occur in the Rockcastle River, Buck Creek, Beaver Creek and Mill Creek drainages in the upper Cumberland River basin below Cumberland Falls.

A colleague at Yale University, Tom Near, had been studying the Striped Darter and found that the Buck Creek population was in fact a distinct and undescribed species in the Barcheek Darter group.

In 2015, Near and Thomas formally described the new species as the Buck Darter (*Etheostoma nebra*), which was published in the Bulletin of the Peabody



Buck Darter breeding male (above) and female (below). *Matt Thomas photo*

Museum of Natural History.

The Buck Darter is endemic to the Buck Creek drainage. Individuals reach about three inches in length and the males develop brilliant breeding colors during the early spring spawning period.

Unfortunately, this beautiful little fish has undergone a dramatic decline during the past 30 years and now appears to be restricted to the Flat Lick Creek system, a small tributary of Buck Creek about seven

miles northeast of Somerset near the community of Shopville, Pulaski County.

Reasons for its decline are uncertain, but further research is underway to learn more about its population size, life history, and ecology. A partnership between the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Eastern Kentucky University, and Conservation Fisheries, Inc. has been formed to develop conservation objectives for the species.

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WE GET MAIL

Letters to the Commissioner's Office

U.S. Senator Rand Paul wrote the following note.

"I want to extend my gratitude to **Matthew Parmley**, an Officer with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, for his assistance to my Constituent Service Representative, Alexandra Baston on February 16, 2016.

Officer Parmley assisted my staffer with a flat tire after she left my Town Hall Meeting in Monticello. Please extend my appreciation to your Officer for going beyond his call of public service to help my staffer.

I wish him my best with his career with the KY Department of Fish and Wildlife."

The following note came from mother and daughter, Jenn and Kate B.

"Dear **Laura (Burford) and Fish & Wildlife Staff**. We just wanted to take this opportunity to send a THANKS for the Outdoorsman Greenwing Adventure! Kate had a fantastic weekend and enjoyed every moment. She learned so much and made some pretty awesome memories!

Also, thanks for putting on the Hunter Education class. It was a great way to pass the time while the kids were away hunting!

Thanks to all for taking your weekend to spend with the kids! We are so fortunate to have had this opportunity and are most appreciative!"

This note came from Ryan S.

"I just wanted to tell you all how much I really enjoyed coming for the Greenwing Duck Hunt. Everyone was so nice to us and they fed us good and made sure that we were having fun too. My dad really enjoyed it too.

Thank you all so much for inviting me to come. I can't wait to do it again. My dad is going to get my duck mounted and I can't wait to get it back. I will send you a picture of me and my duck. So thank you all for a fun weekend and I can't wait to get to do it again."

Knox County officer Stacey Bryant retires

Conservation Officer **Stacey Bryant** retired February 29 after nearly 17 years with the Division of Law Enforcement.

Bryant began his career with state government in 1997 after graduating Eastern Kentucky University that same year with a bachelor degree in Paralegal Science.

Bryant served three years in the Navy prior to college. He went to work with the Natural Resource Cabinet in the Hazardous Waste Environmental Section immediately after graduation, and worked there until joining Fish

and Wildlife in May 1999, as a Conservation Officer for Clay County.

He transferred to Knox County in 2011. Bryant remained in Knox County until his retirement.



Maintenance manager Pete Elliott retires

Pete Elliott, Maintenance Branch Manager for the Engineering Division at the Game Farm, retired effective March 1, 2016.

Elliott began his KDFWR career in January 1, 2003 with the Engineering Division as a carpenter working for the Woodshop.

Later, he was promoted to the survey crew as an Engineering Technical Associate.

In March 2012, he was promoted to Maintenance Branch Manager for the Engineering Division over the Woodshop.

He finished out his career as the Maintenance Branch Manager, giving the department a dedicated 13 years.

He really enjoys farming and will continue to work after retirement on his farm.





Agency staff helps make 15th annual NASP State Tournament successful

Madison Central High School claimed the top team prize as nearly 4,200 youth archers competed in the 15th annual National Archery in the Schools State Tournament this month.

There were 4,189 archers from 181 teams from 47 counties that participated in the tournament.

Perennial powerhouse Trigg County High School finished a close second only eight points back.

Elementary School, Middle School and High School archers competed in the event. Stewart Pepper of Meade County won the Middle School competition with a team score of 3378 and Shopville Elementary of Pulaski County won its class

DIVISION	PLACE	SCHOOL	COUNTY	SCORE
High School	1st	Madison Central High School	Madison	3449
	2nd	Trigg County High School	Trigg	3441
	3rd	Muhlenberg County High East Campus	Muhlenberg	3407
Middle School	1st	Stuart Pepper Middle School	Meade	3378
	2nd	Pulaski Northern Middle School	Pulaski	3328
	3rd	Muhlenberg South Middle School	Muhlenberg	3316
Elementary	1st	Shopville Elementary	Pulaski	3206
	2nd	Northern Elementary	Pulaski	3170
	3rd	White Hall Elementary	Madison	3137

Complete results can be found here: <http://nasptournaments.org/manager/default.aspx?tid=1070>

with a score of 3206.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife staff from Information and Education, Engineering, Administrative Services, Law Enforcement and Fisheries divisions joined NASP personnel in staffing the event. Agency staff assisted with range setup/teardown, registration, scoring, security, range officials, transportation, and staffed the Fish and Wildlife booth.





Spring fish stocking

Spring means fishing time and the Peter W. Pfeiffer Fish hatchery has already started harvesting ponds with catfish for stocking FINS lakes.

From March 7-17, the hatchery shipped 33,600 catfish weighing 40,000 lbs. Harvesting that many fish is a group effort with staff from the Urban Fisheries Program, the Fish Transporta-

tion Section, and the Hatchery all assisting.

Hatchery staff say this year's fish are looking fat and healthy with some of the big ones weighing as much as five pounds.

The Forks of the Elkhorn Transportation Section will be working hard to deliver these catfish to the many FINS lakes throughout the state.



EKU SOUTHEASTERN WILDLIFE CONCLAVE

Approximately 400 students from 23 universities visited Kentucky in March as part of the annual Southeastern Wildlife Conclave. Eastern Kentucky University's Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society served as the host college. This group participated in the Prescribed Fire and Grassland Habitat Management at Shaker Village. Staff from several KDFWR Divisions stepped up to assist. Thanks to all who helped make this event a huge success!

<https://www.facebook.com/EKUConclave>



Central Kentucky Audubon Society volunteers build 100 prothonotary warbler boxes in just one day

Central Kentucky Audubon Society (CKAS) partnered with KDFWR to fund and construct 100 nest boxes for prothonotary warblers last month.

The prothonotary warbler is a species of greatest conservation need in Kentucky, and has also been placed on the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern list.

The species has been in decline over the past 40 years, with declines mostly at-

tributed to habitat loss.

These “little yellow jobs” nest in forested wetland habitat, such as sloughs and swamps. They are also the only cavity nesting warbler in the southeast.

Prothonotary warblers aren't too picky about what they nest in, as long as it is in close proximity to standing or slow moving water. Prothonotarys will nest in abandoned woodpecker cavities, bluebird nest boxes, gourds, jars, milk cartons and even tennis shoes... as long as it's the right fit.

Because they are so easy to please, they are the perfect candidate for which to build boxes.

Department biologists modeled the PVC nest box design after a successful design that the Wisconsin Division of Natural Resources has used. We hope to boost warbler populations by supplying additional nesting locations.

CKAS rounded up a group of volunteers and pounded out 100 boxes in one afternoon. We then distributed them to Green River WMA, Ballard WMA, Sloughs WMA, Peabody WMA, Yellowbank WMA, and Buckley Wildlife Sanctuary.

Some of the boxes will be monitored for prothonotary warbler use during the coming breeding season.

The nest box plans will be posted on our website.



Deer research teams collar 88 deer in final field season

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's partnership research study with the University of Kentucky of adult does in southeast Kentucky has completed its final field season.

Since the onset of the project in winter of 2014, KDFWR and UK researchers have captured a total of 151 unique adult deer (≥ 0.5 years) in Clay County, KY (Table 1).

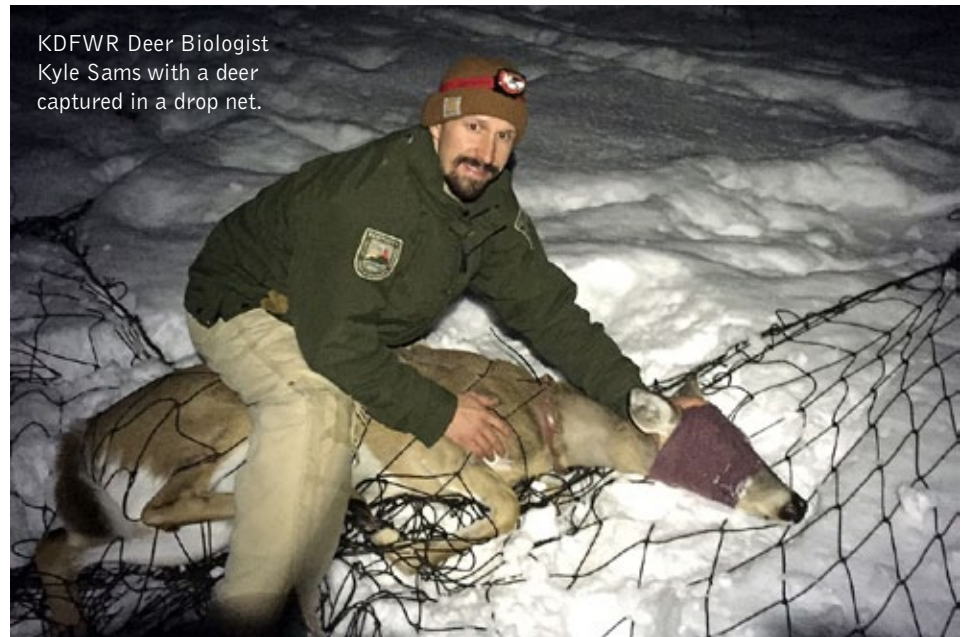
Of these animals, 88 females entered the study and were fitted with radio collars that allow researchers to monitor an animal over a 3-5 year period, or until the animal's death. Thus far, we've witnessed fewer mortality events than we had expected based on similar studies in other areas.

Vehicle collisions have made up the highest percentage of mortalities in the study thus far with hunting being the second highest cause of mortality. Contrary to popular belief, predation has accounted for zero mortalities in the adult female portion of our study, and only one animal died due to poaching.

Table 1: Capture results by method and field season.

CAPTURE METHOD	2014	2015	2016
Drop Net	20	43	29
Clover	18	17	8
Rocket Net	0*	0*	13
Dart	3	0**	0**
TOTALS	41	60	50

* Did not have a rocket net to use as a capture tool prior to 2016 field season.
 ** Did not attempt to dart deer after 2014 field season due to a low success rate.



The data presented is still preliminary and our study animals will continue to be monitored over the course of the next year, so sources and rates of mortality are susceptible to change.

With spring quickly approaching UK researchers and KDFWR personnel are gearing up for the final field season capturing deer fawns for the second segment of this project.

In total, 66 fawns have been captured during the 2 field seasons. Up-to-date annual survival and mortality estimates derived from these projects will provide a better understanding of deer population dynamics in Zone 4 counties.

Through continued research, the Deer and Elk Program will continue to manage deer populations in Kentucky through science-based management practices.



University of Kentucky researchers with a deer captured in a drop net. From left are Jason Clark, Ben Matykiewicz, Joe McDermott, Tyler Walters, and Tim Pyszczyński

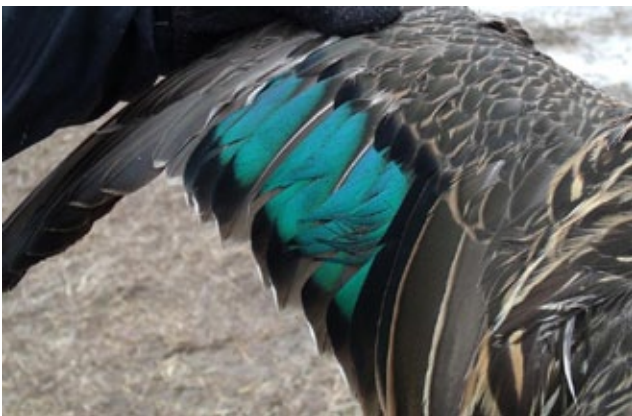
Waterfowl “oddities”

Wildlife Division Regional Coordinator **Tony Black** says they often “get some oddities at Ballard Wildlife Management Area after the season.”

He hoped to share with the rest of the Department these unique shots of waterfowl they recently captured and banded.

The top photo is the offspring of a Mallard and American Wigeon cross.

Bottom three photos are of a Mottled Duck, a species he calls, “pretty rare in our part of the world.”



Kory Knight photos



Central Fisheries District lakes benefit from the Christmas tree drop off program

The trees keep coming!

This year was a banner year for participation in the Christmas Tree drop off program, which allows citizens to donate their trees to the Fisheries Division so that trees can be used to create fish attractors in area lakes.

Central Fisheries District collected more than 1,200 trees that will become fish attractors at McNeely, Elmer Davis, Beaver, Boltz, Cedar Creek, Cave Run and Taylorsville lakes and help improve anglers success.

These attractors are GPS marked with all that information available to the public at the following link: <http://fw.ky.gov/Education/Pages/Department-Lakes-with-Fish-Attractors.aspx>

